

PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

## THE GENUS NYCTIPROGNE.

BY HERBERT FRIEDMANN \*

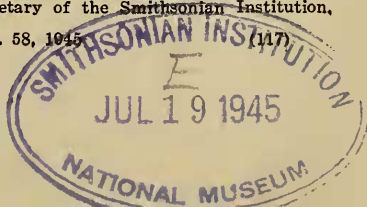
The genus *Nyctiprogne* was established by Bonaparte in 1854 for the species *leucopyga* and has been considered as a monotypic group ever since. The very small bill with somewhat concealed nostrils is the criterion of the genus. Study of new and more extensive material of this group, always rather uncommon in collections, reveals that it contains not one but at least three forms, two of which are herein described for the first time. The characters of these forms, especially when taken into consideration along with their geographic occurrence indicates that for the present, at least until more data are forthcoming, it may be advisable to consider them as of two distinct, but obviously related, species. We may start with the one already known, the one called in books "small-billed nighthawk" *Nyctiprogne leucopyga* (Spix) which ranges from the Orinoco eastward to Cayenne and southward to southwestern Matto Grosso. To date no one has attempted to divide it into local races, but a study of a series from the extreme upper Orinoco and the northern Brazo Casiquiare reveals that the birds of that area are darker and smaller than examples from the Amazon River and also have the remiges less extensively freckled externally. Inasmuch as the type locality of *leucopyga* is the "wooded shores of the Amazon" it follows that that smaller, darker Venezuelan population is the one that needs a name. It is proposed to call it

*Nyctiprogne leucopyga exigua* subsp. nov.

*Type*: U. S. Nat. Mus. 328356, adult ♂ in breeding condition, col-

\*Published by permission of the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

28—PROC. BIOL. SOC. WASH., VOL. 58, 1945



lected on the right bank of the Upper Orinoco opposite Corocoro Island, Venezuela, May 12, 1931, by E. G. Holt, E. R. Blake, and C. T. Agostini.

*Subspecific characters:* similar to *N. l. leucopyga* of the Amazon River but smaller (wings 128.2–136.4 as against 139–142 mm.) and darker, the upper parts with the blackish marks larger, and with the pale buffy marks on the outer webs of the remiges and rectrices much reduced in size and frequency.

*Measurements:* 3 males, including the type, wing 131–136.4 (132.8); tail 83.1–84.1 (83.3 mm.); 1 female—wing 128.2, tail 83.1 mm. (an unsexed *N. l. leucopyga* has a wing 142; tail 93 mm.; another example marked “♂ [♀]” wing 139; tail 86.4 mm.).

*Range:* the upper stretches of the Rio Orinoco (opposite Corocoro Island) south to the northern part of the Brazo Casiquiare (at the mouth of the Rio Pacila), extreme southern Venezuela.

Just to the south of the range of *N. l. exigua*, along the more southern stretches of the Brazo Casiquiare, is another population of which I have seen a good series of specimens. As far as known there are no barriers to effect any spatial isolation between these birds and *exigua* and it may well be that future collecting will find their ranges to overlap. It is partly for this reason, and partly because of the number of characters by which it differs from *N. leucopyga* and also because it looks as though it should be an extreme variant of that species but is geographically in between typical *leucopyga* and *exigua*, that I provisionally treat it as a distinct species. It is, admittedly, close to *N. leucopyga*. This bird may be known as

#### *Nyctiprogne latifascia* sp. nov.

*Type:* U. S. Nat. Mus. 326844, ad. ♂ in breeding condition, collected at Raudal Quirabuena, Brazo Casiquiare, Venezuela, February 5, 1931, by E. G. Holt, E. R. Blake, and C. T. Agostini.

*Specific characters:* similar to *N. leucopyga exigua* in size (very slightly larger, the females more noticeably so) but the remiges and rectrices with no buffy transverse marks on their outer webs, the dark terminal area of the tail (from the white band to the tip of the tail) much broader (47–51 as opposed to 30–40 mm. in *exigua*), and coloration above and below much darker, more blackish, less vermiculated with tawny buff, the crown, occiput, and upper back practically solid fuscous black.

*Description of type:* forehead, lores, crown, and occiput fuscous black; nape similar but the feathers with faint, very small and narrow tips and sparse transverse frecklings of Dresden brown; interscapulars and upper back like the nape but with fewer of the pale markings; scapulars dark fuscous black (almost black) externally edged with pale cinnamon buff; upper wing coverts fuscous black, the median and greater ones with small terminal spots of cinnamon buff; primaries and outer secondaries between clove brown and fuscous, paler basally along the outer margins of the inner webs, the inner secondaries transversely flecked and incompletely barred with pale buffy grayish; lower back like the upper back; upper tail coverts fuscous black; rectrices fuscous black, crossed by a broad

band of white (the white band about 10–12 mm. wide) about 50 mm. from the tips of the feathers; chin, throat, cheeks, auriculars, and breast fuscous black the feathers tipped and transversely flecked with pale ochraceous tawny; abdomen, sides, and flanks fuscous black barred with white, the white bars narrower than the blackish interspaces and sometimes tinged with buffy; under tail coverts similar but with the pale bars wider, usually not narrower than the dark interspaces; under wing coverts fuscous black barred with whitish; wing 134, tail 91.8; width of terminal tail band 47.1 mm.

*Measurements:* 5 ♂s including the type—wing 133–137.4 (134.7); tail 87.4–95.9; width of terminal tail band 47.1–51 (49.1 mm.); 2 ♀—wing 135.2–137.1; tail 83–93.4; width of terminal tail band 47.5–50 mm.

*Range:* known only from extreme southern Venezuela, from San Carlos on the uppermost reaches of the Río Negro to Raudal Quirabuena on the Brazo Casiquiare. As stated above the distinction between the ranges of *latifascia* and of *exigua* is hard to account for except by the accident of collecting. I know of no other bird whose range terminates anywhere along the Casiquiare only to have another closely related form “take up” where it leaves off. It is for this reason that I suspect that eventually *N. leucopyga exigua* and *N. latifascia* may be found together, and this, in turn, necessitates treating the latter as a species.

It may be pointed out that there may be still another undescribed subspecies of *N. leucopyga* in the southern part of its range. Thus, Naumburg (Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., ix, 1930, p. 138) writes of a specimen from Villa Bella de Matto Grosso as “remarkably large but not otherwise different,” from Amazonian examples.